

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 5707

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PINT, SREF, CVIS, OGEN, UR
SUBJ: SOVIET JEWISH EMIGRATION; A MILD SIGNAL?

REF: MOSCOW 5382

1. SUMMARY. WHILE WE BELIEVE THAT THE CONTINUING INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF JEWS GRANTED EXIT PERMISSION (REF-TEL), PARTICULARLY URGAN JEWS, CAN NO LONGER BE CONSIDERED MERELY IN TERMS OF PRE-CONGRESS "WINDOW-DRESSING", WE STILL BELIEVE IT PREMATURE TO CONSTRUE THE INCREASE AS A HARD SIGNAL FROM THE SOVIETS. HOWEVER, SHOULD THIS TREND CONTINUE THROUGH APRIL, BY WHICH TIME ANY CONGRESS-RELATED DISTORTION CAN BE EXCLUDED, THEN IT WOULD INDEED BE POSSIBLE TO SPEAK OF A CHANGE IN SOVIET EMIGRATION POLICY. END SUMMARY.

2. THE NUMBER OF SOVIET JEWS RECEIVING EXIT PERMISSION HAS RISEN STEADILY FOR THREE MONTHS. THIS HAPPENED ONLY ONCE IN 1975. WHILE SOME OF THIS INCREASE WAS PROBABLY DUE TO A DESIRE TO SHOW A POSITIVE FACE TO WESTERN GOVERNMENTS AND WESTERN PUBLIC OPINION AT THE TIME OF THE PARTY CONGRESS, WE SHOULD NOW CONSIDER IF THERE HAS IN FACT BEEN A CHANGE IN EMIGRATION POLICY. THE APRIL FIGURES WILL BE PARTICULARLY SIGNIFICANT IN THIS CONNECTION, BECAUSE BY THE END OF MARCH VIRTUALLY ALL OF THOSE JEWS WHO MAY HAVE RECEIVED PERMISSION TO LEAVE IN CONNECTION WITH THE CONGRESS SHOULD HAVE LEFT THE SOVIET UNION. WITH FEW EXCEPTIONS, URBAN JEWS, WHOSE EXIT

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PERMISSIONS ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE CONGRESS-RELATED, NORMALLY

ARE GIVEN THREE WEEKS TO LEAVE THE USSR ONCE THE VISA HAS BEEN ISSUED. THUS THE APRIL FIGURES SHOULD BE LARGELY FREE OF CONGRESS-RELATED DISTORTION. THE MARCH FIGURES ARE NOT, AND WE THEREFORE BELIEVE IT PRUDENT TO WAIT ANOTHER MONTH BEFORE JUDGING WHETHER A SIGNAL IS BEING TRANSMITTED.

3. A CONTINUING INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF VISAS ISSUED (ESPECIALLY TO JEWS FROM LARGE CITIES) WOULD BE INDICATIVE OF SOVIET DESIRES TO SEND A "SIGNAL" TO THE WEST. WE THINK THAT A DRAMATIC INCREASE IN EMIGRATION IS UNLIKELY, IF ONLY BECAUSE IT COULD BE CONSTRUED IN THE WEST AS A SURRENDER TO THE PRESSURE OF WESTERN JEWISH GROUPS (ESPECIALLY AS A SURRENDER TO THE PRESSURE FROM THE "JEWISH ARMED RESISTANCE"). A CONTINUING, IF SMALL INCREASE, ON THE OTHER HAND, COULD BE PORTRAYED AS REFLECTING FAITHFUL OBSERVANCE OF CSCE BASKET III OBLIGATIONS. FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS IT COULD BE DESIGNED AS A VISIBLE REMINDER TO THE AMERICAN PUBLIC IN THE PRE-ELECTION PERIOD OF THE POSSIBLE POSITIVE EFFECTS OF A POLICY OF "DETENTE" WITH THE SOVIET UNION.
BREMENT

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